



U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
District of Kansas

NEWS RELEASE

Eric Melgren, U.S. Attorney

Contact: Kena Rice

(316) 269-6481

Headquarters
1200 Epic Center
301 N. Main
Wichita, Kansas 67202
(316)269-6481
FAX (316)269-6484

Topeka Office
444 Quincy
Topeka, Kansas 66683

Kansas City Office
500 State Avenue
Suite 360
Kansas City, Kansas
66101

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

News releases are available at www.usdoj.gov/usao/ks/

April 6, 2004

GRAND JURY RETURNS INDICTMENTS

WICHITA, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that eleven individuals were indicted on April 6, 2004, by a federal grand jury in Wichita, Kansas. Those indicted include:

- ! **Steven L. Otto**, 44, Wichita, Kansas, is charged with one count of fraudulently receiving Social Security Disability benefits.

The indictment alleges that from 1997 through December 2000, Otto received Social Security Disability benefits and fraudulently concealed from the Social Security Administration the fact that he was employed during this time which made him ineligible for these benefits

If convicted, Otto faces a maximum of five years in federal prison without parole. The case was investigated by the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Alan Metzger.

- ! **John Jason Ingram**, 28, and **Robert D. Mewhinney**, 28, both of Wichita, Kansas, both currently in custody, are each charged with one count of passing counterfeit \$50 Federal Reserve Notes on March 19, 2004, in Wichita, Kansas.

If convicted, Ingram and Mewhinney each face a maximum of twenty years in federal prison without parole. The case was investigated by the U.S. Secret Service and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Alan Metzger.

–MORE–

- ! **Celio Aguila Mendez**, age unknown, Garden City, Kansas, **Raul Melendez**, 24, address unknown, **Jacobo Mendoza-Ponce**, 23, Lingoo, California, all currently in custody, are each charged with one count of possessing counterfeit payroll checks which were represented as being drawn upon the account of Tyson Foods on March 4, 2004, in Finney County, Kansas.

If convicted, each face a maximum of ten years in federal prison without parole. The case was investigated by the U.S. Secret Service and is being prosecuted Assistant U.S. Attorney Alan Metzger.

- ! **Wesley Richard Pennington**, 47, Goodland, Kansas, currently in custody, is charged with one count of possession a handgun in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime; one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm; one count of manufacturing methamphetamine; and one count of possessing prohibited equipment and chemicals with the intent to manufacture methamphetamine, all on January 1, 2004, in Sherman County, Kansas.

If convicted, Pennington faces a minimum of five years in federal prison, without parole, for possessing a handgun in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime; a maximum of ten years for being a felon in possession of a firearm; a minimum of five years and a maximum of forty years for manufacturing methamphetamine; and a maximum of four years for possessing prohibited equipment and chemicals with the intent to manufacture methamphetamine. The case was investigated by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Matt Treaster.

- ! **Cesar Fernando Gastelum-Macias**, 30, Los Angeles, California, currently in custody, is charged with one count of distributing approximately four pounds of methamphetamine in Wichita, Kansas, on March 5, 2004.

If convicted, Gastelum-Macias faces a minimum of ten years and a maximum of life in federal prison without parole. The case was investigated by the Wichita Police Department.

- ! **Cipriano Torres-Vasquez**, 34, and **Luis Alberto Lozoya-Aguilar**, 24, both of Mexico, currently in custody, are charged with one count of possession with the intent to distribute approximately 200 kilograms (approximately 440 pounds) of marijuana on April 1, 2004; and one count of traveling in interstate commerce with the intent to promote an unlawful activity, possession with the intent to distribute marijuana, on April 1, 2004, both in Thomas County, Kansas.

If convicted, each face a minimum of five years and a maximum of forty years in federal prison, without parole, for possession with the intent to distribute marijuana and a maximum of five years for traveling in interstate commerce to promote an unlawful activity.

—MORE—

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Kansas Highway Patrol.

! Phillip R. Simpson, II, 22, McPherson, Kansas, currently in custody, is charged with one count of possession of marijuana; and one count of possession with the intent to distribute more than 50 grams (more than 1.76 ounces) of crack cocaine, both on April 2, 2004, in McPherson County, Kansas.

If convicted, Simpson faces a maximum of one year in federal prison, without parole, for possession of marijuana and a minimum of ten years and a maximum of life for possession with the intent to distribute crack cocaine. The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the McPherson County Sheriff's Office and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Lanny Welch.

As in any criminal case, a person is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. The Indictments filed merely contain allegations of criminal conduct.